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ABSTRACT

The origins and design of a framework for Japanese second language instruction and curriculum development, created for use in international schools in Japan, are described. The effort was part of a Japanese Language Project undertaken by the Japanese Council for International Schools and funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education. The guiding principles included: integration of language forms and communicative functions; purposeful use of language; authentic language materials; priority of spoken language; incorporation of learning strategies as well as content; deliberate focus on form to support development of language use; cyclical and developmental introduction of language; support and enhancement of the learner's cognitive, affective, and cultural development; experiential content reflecting learner needs and interests; creation of connections between school and the world beyond, including skills for independent learning; learning opportunities reflecting learners' differences; reflection on and development of language within a Japanese cultural context; development of an understanding of the culture of the Japanese community; effort to increase friendship and cooperation with Japanese people; and deepened understanding of the learner's own language and culture. Contains 21 references. (MSE)

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Development of Framework in K-12 Japanese as a Second Language

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<Abstract>
This colloquia introduced a new curriculum framework for the teaching of Japanese as a second language for use within K-12 international schools in Japan. The framework has been produced as part of the Japanese Language Project, a project carried out by the Japan Council for International Schools funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education. The paper discusses how a development of the framework emerged in light of the project. Then the guiding principles of the Framework are presented. Framework activates the communicative language teaching in teaching Japanese, and its guiding principles are set from four key elements. Lastly, the short discussion of implications of Framework follows.

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Development of Framework[1] in K-12 Japanese as a Second Language

1. Background

The purpose of this paper is twofold: to present the background of the Framework which was developed as a collaborative effort among teachers and administrators, and to introduce the guiding principles which are the central themes in the Framework. The rapid increase in the awareness of foreign language instruction for younger learners, in North America particularly, attracts attention to languages such as Japanese. Teaching Japanese as a second language in precollegiate levels in North American, Australia and elsewhere has gained much currency in the last decade, as the number of learners of all ages has increased (e.g. Marriott et al. 1993, Okazaki & Okazaki 1991). For example, in the States, though Spanish has the largest number of learners, Japanese showed the most increase as a foreign language subject. In the States, the enrollment of high school students in Japanese increased from 25,123 in 1992 to 42,787 in 1994, or a 41% increase (The Breeze, 1995). In Australia, by 1988, the enrollment figures for Japanese had doubled, and overtook French by 1989 at the tertiary level (Marritt et al. 1993:1). This increased interest is indeed also alive in Japan in the group called JCIS (Japan Council of International Schools[2]). Member schools in JCIS are K-12 (primary and secondary levels) private schools where the medium of instruction is English, and whose curricula are mostly based on North America system.

In order to respond to the changing needs in language learning theories and practice, JCIS started what was called the Japanese Language Project[3] (JLP) in 1992. Through the survey conducted in the project, Japanese language was found to be one of the vital components of the overall programs in JCIS. Through several workshops held for professional development, teachers began a strong effort to network[4]. The call for a framework was put forth during the workshops, meetings,

and informal contacts with the Japanese language teachers. This was in response to the need for a communicative approach to language learning. JCIS, like everyone else, has been going through a shift in their Japanese language classroom practice as well as in the area of curriculum development.

Some background is necessary here. First, JCIS schools are unlike public K-12 schools in Japan and elsewhere. JCIS teachers, working for private schools, have curriculum development and renewals part of their responsibilities. JCIS itself has a networking function, and does not act as the governing authority of member schools as the Ministry of Education does for Japanese public schools. Thus each JCIS school has a curriculum articulated according to the goals and objectives of their own program. Second, it is given that curriculum development is an on-going process. It is to be reviewed periodically and up-dated. In one school in JCIS, for example, there is a long term plan for curriculum renewal that is activated every five years. In each area, whether it is Japanese, social studies, or technology, the school will actively review its curriculum for the entire school. Third, curriculum renewal is a collaborative effort among teachers, curriculum coordinators, department chairs, and administrators. Parents are not usually part of the team, but they have an access to the results, if they are interested.

In the last decade or so, one the the buzz words in the field of teaching Japanese as a second/foreign language has been "diversity." JCIS Japanese language programs is an exemplar of "diversity." The survey from the JLP (Kite 1995b) reveals that the learners are diverse in their L1, knowledge of Japanese, language usage patterns at home and community, and parents' language(s). Programs show as much diversity as the in learners according to school's goals and objectives. Some focus on the cultural aspects, and some have the characteristics of a bilingual program. Among these aspects of diversity, the following are common elements:

1. Japanese language programs are vital part of the overall JCIS programs.

Japanese is taught as a requirement[4] in 96% of the elementary schools, (or 22 out of 23 schools), 68% of the middle school[5] and 44% of the high schools. In middle and high schools where foreign languages are offered, Japanese has the highest number of enrollment (Japanese 89%, French 8%, Spanish 3%). The school administrators consider (95%) that Japanese language instruction is valued part of their curriculum.

2. Teachers would like to develop a strong network among themselves.

Through the survey, the Japanese language teachers expressed a strong desire to strengthen their network. The JLP helped to forge a strong bond among teachers by making them aware that their professional concerns are similar, and they can indeed work together (see Kite 1995a, 1994)

3. The areas of concerns among the teachers, program coordinators, and administrators are consistent.

Two areas were identified: curriculum and classroom management. Teachers expressed consistently in workshop evaluation forms, meeting minutes, and reaction sheets. In the survey results, curriculum/syllabus and related issues such as the number of ability levels in one class, was mentioned by 41% of respondents as the area for concerns. Classroom managements ranked second as 29%.

The concerns about curriculum are expected, if as mentioned above, you consider the teaching context at JCIS where curriculum renewal is an on-going process. The need for a framework emerges from teachers as well as from the program organizers in attempt to respond to the changing needs in a classroom. A framework is defined as "a resource and a planning tool for planning, implementing and evaluating language program" (Nunan 1994). In the field of foreign language instruction, numerous frameworks/guidelines are available (see the Framework 1995 resources and references section). Some are geared to

high school foreign language programs (e.g. Indiana Department of Education 1986, Minnesota Department of Education 1988, National Standards, in preparation). Some advocate foreign language instruction at earlier age (e.g. South Carolina 1994, California 1989) . Though written for adults, the ones from the National Curriculum Project (Nunan and Burton, 1989) are written for specific leaner or skills. The most comprehensive guidelines for K-12 comes from Australia (Scarino, Angela et al. , 1988). In the field of teaching Japanese, two are published in the States (Brockett, C. et al. 1994, Unger J. M. et al. 1993). Both are aimed at Japanese programs at high schools in the States in a foreign language setting. (see the review of all available frameworks for teaching Japanese in the Framework, 1995, and *Forum Tsuushin*, No. 29, Dec. 1995).

Reviews of the available frameworks led to the development of our own framework. For example, we considered whether these available framework are relevant based on the three points. (1) consistent to theories and practices of second language learning, (2) relevant to our teaching context (learners' age, Japanese as a host language), and (3) something that can engage teachers and educators. The strengths of each framework were consolidated and adjusted to fit the JCIS context.

2. Scope of Framework

No framework can cover all the learner's ages, learning objectives, and learning context. For our JCIS context, the scope of the Framework was defined as follows:

- elementary and secondary students in JCIS
- students whose first language is not Japanese
- students with no previous knowledge of, or limited proficiency in Japanese

In the Framework, we also noted that learners are a diverse group with the

following characteristics. Students are diverse in:

- first language
- learning styles and strategies
- aptitude and motivation
- interest in using language outside the classroom

3. Guiding Principles

In developing a framework to help teachers plan, implement, and evaluate courses for teaching Japanese as a Second Language, it was necessary, in the first instance to think through and articulate a set of philosophical principles. We developed these principles with reference to the four key elements of (1) language, (2) learning, (3) learners, and (4) sociocultural context. Set out below are the key principles which we believe should guide the development of curricula.

3. 1 **Language**

3. 1. 1. language forms and communicative functions are integrated

Mastering language forms, that is, the pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary of Japanese, is central to successfully acquiring the language. However, language forms must not be taught separately from the communication skills that learners wish to develop. When language is taught in ways which make clear the relationship between language forms and their usage, learners are best able to choose the right patterns to express their ideas and feelings. In other words, while learners should be given a systematic introduction to pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, the emphasis should remain on the way these forms are used to communicate.

The materials must also make clear the sociocultural contexts within which particular grammatical and vocabulary choices are made, so that learners will be able to make choices that are not only grammatically correct but communicatively

appropriate.

3. 1. 2 language is purposeful

This is closely related to the preceding one, and highlights the fact that all spoken and written language occurs in context of usage, and that the words and structures we use are always closely related to this context and purpose. In other words, the overall structure, appearance, and grammatical elements of language in usage reflect the purposes for which the language itself was created.

3. 1. 3 language is presented as an interlocking set of systems and subsystems

Language exists as interlocking systems of sounds, words, and grammar. These different elements can be isolated for the purposes of study. However, in order to be able to use them communicatively, learners need to experience the various subsystems in an integrated fashion. The traditional way of teaching second and foreign languages is to begin with the smallest elements (individual sounds and words) and build up to the largest (complete texts and discourses). However, in recent years, the trend has been to adopt a more holistic approach. This means that from the earliest stages, learners should encounter pieces of language produced in the course of meaningful interaction, that is, language as discourse.

3. 1. 4 learners are presented with authentic data

In traditional classrooms, learners are exposed to spoken and written texts which have been written specially for the classroom. As a consequence, they often find it difficult to understand language used in the world beyond the classroom. We believe that from the earliest stages students should study samples of spoken and written texts which are typical of the types of language they are likely to encounter outside the classroom.

3. 1. 5 spoken language has priority

In most contexts, communication means speaking Japanese. Spoken language

and language forms should therefore be given priority in the Japanese language classroom.

3. 2 **Learning**

3. 2. 1. the curriculum incorporates learning-how-to-learn goals as well as language content goals

In addition to teaching language, instruction should also develop learning skills. There are many ways in which this can be done. For example, learners can be encouraged to reflect on the goals of their learning, and the strategies underlying learning tasks can be made explicit. Likewise, the students can be encouraged to make choices, and they can be involved in monitoring and assessing their own progress.

Materials should develop the learner's thinking and reasoning strategies, so that he or she learns how to learn in a more systematic way. This requires that tasks are carefully constructed so as to become gradually more cognitively complex. For example, skills in processing information should be introduced before students learn to interpret data. But students should be taught to interpret data before being asked to bring their own experiences to bear on it.

3. 2. 2. learners are actively involved in using the language in a wide range of communicative activities

A growing body of evidence suggests that learners learn best by actively using the language in communicative activities. The evidence suggests a clear relationship between the amount of time a learner spends using the language, and how far he/she progresses in acquiring it. The curriculum should therefore emphasize getting students to do things with language. Learners learn by doing. Following earlier principles, the stress should not be primarily on learning about

language, but on using it. The relevant questions here are: "What can you do with your Japanese?" "Can you obtain information from a range of aural and written sources and use it to some communicative end?" "What goods and services can you obtain?" "What concepts can you express and interpret in the Japanese you know?" "Can you express your opinions and feelings and interpret those of others?" "Can you persuade others and respond to their points of view?"

3. 2. 3. there is a deliberate focus on form to support the development of the ability to use the language

Learners do not acquire language one item at a time, perfectly. Rather, they acquire numerous features at once, and imperfectly. In other words, mastery of language form is an organic, rather than linear process. It therefore follows that learning items should be recycled and represented in a wide range of contexts and situations. Learners learn language organically absorbing more than one thing at a time and gradually making adjustments to what they already know as they are confronted with new data. Accordingly, we should try to emulate this gradual accumulation and transformation of what learners know, rather than adopting a strictly sequential and mechanical model of progression through the syllabus.

3 . 2. 4. language is introduced and reintroduced cyclically and developmentally

In terms of language development, we believe that learning is an organic, spiral process, not a linear one. One consequence of this view is that recycling of content, topics, grammar, etc., is considered to be healthy because it reinforces the way in which children acquire language.

3. 3. **Learners**

3. 3. 1. Instruction is directed towards supporting and enhancing the learner's cognitive, affective, social and cultural development

It needs to be borne firmly in mind that JSL is an integral part of the educational experience of the student. The language classroom should therefore strive to teach the intellectual, social, cultural and moral values which should be the ultimate aim of all educators. In language learning this can be done through the development of cognitive tasks such as classifying, deductive and inductive learning, inferencing etc., through socialization tasks associated with cooperative, group learning, and through culturally appropriate themes and content.

3. 3. 2. experiential content reflects the learner's needs and interests

The materials will need to choose theme's and topics which match the interests and aspirations of the JCIS school student and which are in harmony with the culture and context within which the learning takes place. As a general principle we suggest that the thematic focus should be the individual in relation to his/her local, national and international environments. The curriculum should emphasize the gradual development of four worlds in the learner:

(i) The language and communication world;

(ii) The knowledge and content world;

(iii) The cognitive and learning world;

(iv) The social and interpersonal world.

Accordingly, texts and tasks should be chosen which contribute to all four of the above worlds, not merely, for example, the world of language alone. The learner is developing as an individual in terms of all four worlds as the curriculum proceeds.

3. 3. 4. they are assisted in making connections between school and the world beyond the classroom, and are give skills to learn independently

The fact that students are living and learning in communities where Japanese is the medium of instruction should be acknowledged and exploited. Learners

should be encouraged to make connections between the language they encounter in the classroom, and the language which surrounds them in the community. As their mastery increases, they should be involved in collecting samples of language for study and exploitation within the classroom.

3. 3. 5 learning opportunities reflect the fact that learners are different and learn in different ways

The curriculum reflect the fact that learners are different and learn in different ways. This can be achieved through building diversity into the language content and learning processes in the curriculum.

3. 4. **Sociocultural context**

3. 4. 1. they reflect upon and develop language within a Japanese cultural setting and context

The curriculum must make explicit the complex interrelationships between language, society and culture. In all societies, critical cultural elements are reflected in the language. In Japan, the appropriateness of language forms is more determined by the relationship between the speakers in a conversation. Students of Japanese will come to an appreciate the fact that language is a manifestation of society and culture.

3. 4. 2 learners develop an understanding of the culture of the Japanese community

The curriculum should encourage "cultural education" across the curriculum, not focused strictly on Japanese classroom. Students should participate in or experience a wide range of cultural events, both traditional and popular, for example, the tea ceremony, *kabuki*, chopsticks, and Japanese baths.

3. 4. 3 they increase, through their emerging mastery of Japanese, the possibility of understanding, friendship and cooperation with people who speak Japanese

The curriculum should encourage students to establish relationships with speakers of Japanese beyond the confines of the classroom and the school. Through access to the Japanese community, students will develop an appreciation of the host country and its people.

3. 4. 4 they deepen their understanding and appreciation of their own language and culture

By activating their language outside the classroom, students develop an understanding not only of the role of language in Japanese culture, but of the role of language in their own culture.

4. JCIS and Beyond

Although this Framework has specific audience in mind as seen above, the Framework can serve many Japanese language educators beyond JCIS. One of the strengths of this Framework is that it includes both theories and practical application devices. Theories presented are consistent with the communicative approach in second language acquisition theory and instruction. Therefore the Framework can speak to language educators in general. We believe that the guiding principles set forth can serve learners of any age, of different goals (than gain greater involvement in Japanese society), and in any context (outside of Japan). Not only are the theories expressed in a user-friendly manner, but there are examples for applications useful in many contexts. For example, when teacher endorses the notion of "learner-centered" (Nunan 1988) and "task-based learning" (Nunan 1989), then rationale and ways in which one can incorporate such notions in your curriculum are clearly stated in the Framework.

The second distinct strength in our Framework is that it can indeed "engage" teachers and those concerned in language learning by providing explicit ways to use this document. One such idea is action research. The framework

articulates one-by-one step on how one can engage in such professional development both in second and foreign language contexts. This is crucial. Otherwise it would simply collect dust on a shelf.

As far as we know this is the first Framework developed in Japan. As we stated, this document is just a beginning. It has ample potential as a tool for many language teachers and administrators.

Notes:

1. A Framework for Teaching Japanese as a Second Language. The Japan Council of International Schools Curriculum Development & renewal project for the teaching of Japanese as a second language (1995). Tokyo: The Japanese Ministry of Education and the Japan council of International Schools. These two authors wish to express gratitude for funding of which made this document possible. The authors are consultants and writing team members of this Framework.
2. An association of K-12 international schools whose program is based on North American curricula (N=27, and the total enrollment=8,500+). For details, see Outline of International schools in Japan, (1995). Tokyo: Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.
3. See the report on the Japanese Language Project in Kite, Y. (1995b) for details.
4. The Kanto (Tokyo and northern area) region had their own networking. The JLP was the first to put all the teachers both in Kanto and Kansai (Nagoya west) together.
5. The only exception according to the survey result was those students who are enrolled in ESOL. They do not usually take Japanese. This is claimed due to the idea that the students' English development is the primary focus. Second, this seems to be a reflection of the first reason, ESOL and Japanese are taught at the same time.
6. Grade 6 through 9 in most of the JCIS schools.

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